

Land Use Comprehensive Plan Task Force

2/7/2007 Meeting Notes by Andrew Jacobson

Rice Street Library meeting room

Members Present: Rich Kramer (chair) Gladys Morton, Gloria Bogen, Kevin Flynn, Tim Griffin, Monte Hilleman, Keith Jans, Ed Johnson, Jeff Ochs, Chuck Repke, David Stokes and Dede Wolfson

Members Absent: Bob Cudahy, Matt Mejia, Lori Fritts, Lorrie Louder, Eric Mitchell, Dick Nowlin

Staff Present: Larry Soderholm, Andrew Jacobson

1. **Welcome** by Rich Kramer. The members and staff introduced themselves.
2. **Land Use Plan and relationship to Comp Plan 2008.** Five citywide comprehensive plan chapters must be done by 2008: transportation, land use, water, housing and parks. Land use may be the most fundamental of all the comprehensive plans. Land use trends and issues will be discussed through the task force's schedule of meetings. Recommendations will be made by the task force and a draft of the land use chapter will be written by Penny Simison. The draft of the chapter will go through the public review and approval process beginning around March 2008. The draft will need to be approved by the Planning Commission, City Council and Mayor in time for the December 2008 deadline for submission to the Metropolitan Council.

Larry Soderholm requested that all the task force members read and be familiar with the *Comprehensive Plan Scoping Report, A Lens for the Future: Saint Paul for the Next 25 Years*, and the executive summary from the current *Land Use Plan*.

Members asked how the Central Corridor initiative is related to the Land Use chapter. Soderholm responded that two Central Corridor Task Forces (one for the University Avenue and another for Downtown) are developing a *Central Corridor Development Strategy* which will be a chapter of the Comp Plan. It will provide useful ideas and information about land use. The Planning Commission will need to make sure the Central Corridor and Land Use Plans are consistent.

3. **Land Use Trends and Issues.** Soderholm initiated a roundtable discussion of emerging trends and issues that will impact land use. All of the members contributed their ideas in a lively discussion. The comments are grouped roughly by idea.

- **National issues:**
 - Movement toward energy independence and how we plan for that. Need for localized power supplies. Should we encourage alternative energy? Opportunity for more district energy projects.

- Technology and the internet continue to advance at rapid pace; it will drive the need for different types of buildings (housing, commercial and industrial). Technology will influence parking and transportation.
- Sustainability and having a smaller ecological footprint is increasingly important; relationship with water and green space.
- Increasing concerns over aesthetics.
- NIMBYism.
- **Corridors:**
 - Ayd Mill Road, Phalen Blvd, Pierce Butler Connection, Great Northern Corridor (smaller land openings and opportunities than with Phalen Blvd).
 - Central Corridor has vast implications, but needs to stay grounded in economic reality. Need to examine economic implications of the line and its effects on business and the surrounding residential communities. Opportunities for higher density housing. Where will current big box retailers move as land prices rise? Business changes on University may present opportunities on other commercial strips. Can we learn from the Hiawatha Line? Yes, but perhaps more on traffic safety than land use.
- **Demographics:**
 - Aging metro population with fewer young people. Seniors need to stay mobile and effective. Will there be receiving zones somewhere for seniors? Always ask “Would you want your parents there?” Look at *Planning to Stay* by Bill Morrish. Possibility that older adults will want to remain in their old neighborhoods. What is marketable to seniors? Need to evaluate local facilities and services near senior housing.
 - Accurate data and identifying trends in immigration is critical. However, immigrants are not well represented on the Task Force. Maintaining cultural practices like Hmong gardening are crucial for the respective populations. Will immigrants help change the traditional commercial and retail spaces? Will increasing diversity of commercial and retail spaces (driven by increasing immigration) require different land use strategies? Education is critical for immigrants to help them get jobs and advance in careers. Important connections between immigrants, housing, jobs and education that should be analyzed.
- **Zoning issues:**
 - Trend towards splitting lots into smaller lots, often with variances.
 - Changing single family homes into duplexes or subdividing with multiple renters. Trend towards absentee renters.
 - Compare that trend with large family housing demand.
 - Need to preserve industrial land; cannot redevelop it all into condos. Physical products still need to come into and out of the city. Strike a balance between heavier industrial and light industrial which bring in jobs. New IR zoning district can be compatible with residential communities.

- Parking, can we reduce it? Concentrate it? Hide it?
- Auto-oriented commercial areas or continuous pedestrian storefronts? Parking needs are different for each. TOD opportunities.
- With increasing density what happens to buffers separating different land uses?
- **Parks and greenspace**
 - What are the best strategies and land uses surrounding parks, e.g. Trillium site? Senior housing - opportunities for improvement and synergy.
 - Immigrants want different recreational opportunities (i.e. increasing need for soccer fields by Hispanics).
 - Need for parks along Central Corridor.
- **New rules and legislation**
 - New watershed district rules in 2006 changed regulations on storm water. Storm water needs better treatment, possibly with increased technology. New BMP's needed. New regulations are more expensive.
 - Change in state's eminent domain laws. This will handicap redevelopment and make it much harder to condemn structures for blight reasons and nearly as difficult for environmental reasons. How do we plan without the use of eminent domain? Site assembly is harder. Will affect site design.
 - New accounting rules that require a full account of environmental problems and clean-up costs on their balance sheet. Nationally, corporations have begun selling their brownfield sites, a potential opportunity.
- **Downtown Saint Paul:**
 - Look at the Downtown Plan, what will happen to downtown edges as Lowertown and East 7th get filled in? Increased density on edges of downtown?
 - Will CBD be the heart of the east Metro area, or a hole in the middle of the city? And to what extent? Downtown should be the site for unique facilities and services that attract customers from a large area.
- **Major employers:**
 - Identify which institutions are growing (state offices, hospitals, colleges) or shrinking.
 - Need for more medical offices? But needs to be grounded in market reality. Possible need for smaller medical offices.
 - Government may expand.
 - Wilder, Regions Hospital, and the State Capitol will soon be on the Central Corridor. How will this affect transportation and parking both downtown and in the larger region?
- **Real estate market and redevelopment:**
 - Competition for brownfield clean-up funding is fiercer today: more suburban competition and the sites in the city are smaller (generally all brownfields that remain are under 10 acres).

- Concern over shrinking tax base relative to service needs. What about TIF land? Can more land be taxed? (Roughly one-third of the land in the city is tax exempt but this is comparable to Minneapolis and other central cities.) This is an important subject but not necessarily relevant for Land Use Plan.
- Refocusing on smaller neighborhoods.
- Saint Paul will have a lot of vacant industrial land in near future: Ford, 3M, Globe, Griffen, and West Side Flats. How fast will the market be able to absorb it?
- Different market today in commercial and retail buildings such as in Roseville, CBD and along transportation corridors. Offices want larger floor plates. Some older office buildings are being converted to housing.

4. **Requests for additional information:**

- a. Dates of the small area plans
- b. A review of the existing Land Use Plan with as assessment of what recommendations have been effective or ineffective, what still should be implemented and how conditions have changed.
- c. Accurate and current demographics as well as trends, possibly from the State Demographic Office; both population and employment.
- d. Market realities in the Central Corridor area and updates on the project
- e. Details about other cities' experiences with LRT such as Dallas, Denver or Salt Lake
- f. Crossover meetings on topics of interest to several of the comp plan task forces.

5. **Task force housekeeping.** Contact information was briefly checked. Task force meeting schedule was also briefly looked at and no major conflicts were brought up.

Meeting ended at approximately 7:00 pm.

